

September 8, 2003

Dear Interested Party,

For the past three years, the Department of Natural Resources has been working with the Lake Whatcom DNR Landscape Planning Committee to develop and analyze alternatives that will ultimately become the Lake Whatcom Landscape Plan for 15,700 acres of state forest land.

In September 2002, the department released the Preliminary Draft EIS to gather more public input to develop a draft preferred alternative. The analysis of the five alternatives in the PDEIS generated a wealth of comments from the public, trust beneficiaries, and other government agencies. The department compiled and considered these comments and responded to them in a Response Summary released in December, 2002. Both of these documents are on the DNR website at www.dnr.wa.gov

The Committee and the department worked together to develop a preferred alternative, which is presented in this Draft EIS. The Preferred Alternative is bracketed for analysis purposes by the No Action Alternative and Alternative 3 from the PDEIS. In addition to analyzing the Preferred Alternative relative to the other two alternatives, analysts considered new information from a number of scientific citations offered in the PDEIS comments.

We focused on three main areas of concern in drafting the Preferred Alternative: slope stability (public safety), water quality, and cultural resources. DNR and the Board of Natural Resources have the charge and responsibility to sustainably manage state-owned forests. This requires finding the appropriate balance between generating revenue for the trust beneficiaries, protecting the environment, and providing a variety of public benefits. These were all factors considered in developing the Preferred Alternative.

With today's release of the DEIS, the public has 30 days to provide comment. The comment period closes at 5:00 pm pdt on October 8, 2003. The department will then respond to comments and will use this information to draft the Final EIS. We anticipate delivering the FEIS to the Board of Natural Resources in December, 2003.

DNR welcomes your thoughtful comments, and thanks you for your time and interest.

Doug Sutherland
Commissioner of Public Lands